

Prevention

Power

How To Reduce Disaster Damage

WILDFIRES

Once a wildfire is threatening your community, it's often too late to protect your home and belongings. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's *Project Impact: Building Disaster Resistant Communities* offers preventative steps homeowners, communities and businesses can take to reduce disruption and loss before disaster strikes. In areas which have been burned by wildfires, some houses remain while the neighboring houses are destroyed. These houses are misnamed "miracle houses". These houses survive, not because of a miracle, but because the owner has followed some of the common sense tips offered below. Your community can also take important steps to make it safe from wildfires. Community tips are available at the Firewise Web site at <http://www.firewise.org/>. You can't prevent the weather, but... you can prevent the damage.

Tips anyone can tackle:

- Know your risk – contact your local emergency management office or building department or visit the *Project Impact* Web site at www.fema.gov/impact to learn about potential risk areas for your community.
- Make family plans for shelter and establish an out-of-state family contact and plans for the care for pets in the event you must evacuate.
- Remove underbrush and vegetation that can feed a fire.
- Clear the area around your home of leaves, brush, dead limbs and fallen trees.
- Stack firewood 100 feet away and uphill from your home.
- Keep gas grills and propane tanks at least 15 feet from your home.
- Promptly and properly dispose of hazardous materials and store combustible or flammable materials appropriately.

Tips a do-it-yourselfer can tackle:

- Use landscaping to create a safety buffer around your home:
 - Remove vines from the walls of the home.
 - Move shrubs and other landscaping away from the sides of the house.
 - Prune branches and shrubs within 15 feet of chimneys and stove pipes.
 - Remove tree limbs within 15 feet of the ground.
 - Replace highly flammable vegetation such as pine, evergreen, juniper and fir with lower growing, less flammable species.
- Use non-combustible or fire resistant materials when constructing porches or sun decks.
- Regularly clean roof and gutters to remove dead limbs, needles and debris that could spread fire.
- Cover house vents with wire mesh.
- Cover chimneys and stovepipes with spark arrestors.

Tips that require an expert's help:

Project Impact strongly recommends that homeowners hire or consult a qualified professional for assistance with the following prevention measures:

- Consider the use of fuel breaks like patios, sidewalks, rock walls and swimming pools.
- Enclose eaves and overhangs.
- When re-roofing, use fire-resistant roofing materials with a Class A rating or higher.
- Use fire resistant siding.
- Treat windows or use dual- or triple-pane thermal glass.

ABOUT PROJECT IMPACT: Since its inception in 1997, 250 communities representing over 900 jurisdictions and 2,500 business partners have embraced *Project Impact*. Instead of waiting for disasters to occur, *Project Impact* communities plan mitigation projects, develop private and public partnerships, initiate mentoring relationships, and conduct public outreach to reduce damage from potentially devastating disasters. Previous community projects have included creating disaster resistance strategies, revising local building and land use codes, and passing bond issues to construct prevention measures that will impact the entire community.



For more information about *Project Impact* or preventing damage, call your local emergency manager, *Project Impact* community coordinator or FEMA's *Project Impact* at (202) 646-4117 or visit www.fema.gov/impact.